

Members

Sen. Thomas Wyss, Chairman  
Sen. Charles Meeks  
Sen. Timothy Skinner  
Sen. John Broden  
Rep. Tiny Adams  
Rep. David Crooks  
Rep. Robert Cherry  
Rep. Timothy Neese



## **PUBLIC SAFETY MATTERS EVALUATION COMMITTEE**

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Authority: IC 2-5-21-10

### **MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>**

**Meeting Date:** July 31, 2003  
**Meeting Time:** 9:30 A.M.  
**Meeting Place:** Wayne Township (Marion County) Fire  
Department, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Meeting Room  
**Meeting City:** Indianapolis, Indiana  
**Meeting Number:** 2

**Members Present:** Sen. Thomas Wyss, Chairman; Sen. Timothy Skinner; Rep. Tiny Adams; Rep. David Crooks.

**Members Absent:** Sen. Charles Meeks; Sen. John Broden; Rep. Robert Cherry; Rep. Timothy Neese.

Chairman Thomas Wyss called the second meeting of the Public Safety Matters Evaluation Committee to order at 9:45 a.m. After making introductions, Chairman Wyss announced that the Committee would be discussing nightclub safety and the use of indoor pyrotechnics and state and regional firefighting training.

#### Nightclub Safety and Indoor Pyrotechnics

Senator Simpson discussed the background of SCR 32 (2003) concerning the study of nightclub and similar venue safety and the use of indoor pyrotechnics. Senator Simpson asked that the Committee consider certain issues such as the ratio of exits to people and exit identification.

Special Agent in Charge Jeff Groh of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms spoke about the investigation of the nightclub fire in Rhode Island. He stated other factors in addition to the use of indoor pyrotechnics that led to the disaster, including flammable foam placed on the wall as a sound barrier, improperly marked exits, and an exit that opened inward rather than

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

outward.

Phil Ramsey of Ramsey Pyrotechnics spoke on action that can be taken in light of the Rhode Island tragedy. His recommendations were:

- (To) Enforce current fire laws and codes.
- (To) Educate the public of all ages to be responsible for themselves.
- (That) Exits should be more accessible and in more natural locations.
- (That) Enactment of laws are needed as indoor pyrotechnics are not regulated as outdoor pyrotechnics are regulated.

Mr. Ramsey also noted that the American Pyrotechnics Association has issued its own recommendations.

Mark Hopkins of Pyrotechnic Productions added to Mr. Ramsey's comments. He explained how indoor pyrotechnics operate and noted that the fire tragedy in Rhode Island would have been the same if the fire had started by another means. He also suggested that having to obtain a permit for each use of an indoor pyrotechnic display would economically affect his business as there is often only short notice before an event is to take place. He believes that it is the uninsured amateurs who are most likely to cause problems using indoor pyrotechnics. Mr. Ramsey added that indoor pyrotechnics are widely available to amateurs who do not necessarily know how to operate the pyrotechnics properly. Acknowledging this, Senator Wyss asked what can be done, and Mr. Ramsey suggested that education and training are needed.

Representative Adams pointed out that sometimes the only way a fire department knows when an indoor display may occur is if it is notified by the business that sold the pyrotechnics. He suggested the local departments could be helped by revision of state codes. Senator Wyss added that a statewide standard and local authority for permits and inspections are needed to address this problem.

State Fire Marshal Tracy Boatwright spoke about the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1126, suggested that it be adopted by the state, and that violation of rules need to be backed by penalties. Local authorities should be notified before indoor pyrotechnics are used. Marshal Boatwright handed out the latest report from Rhode Island's state legislature addressing nightclub safety and the use of indoor pyrotechnics (Exhibit 1).

Various articles regarding nightclub safety were available to the public at the meeting (Exhibit 2).

### Regional Firefighter Training

Chairman Wyss stated issues relating to regional firefighter training are:

- whether the state should have a central training academy; and
- whether there should be regional centers to alleviate the time and expense of training, alone or in conjunction with a central academy.

James Tidd, Deputy Director for the Grissom Redevelopment Authority, spoke on the possibility of using certain Grissom Air Force Base facilities as a central training site for the state or possibly the Midwest (Exhibit 3). He noted the facilities would be given to the state at no charge, but the operating costs are not known at this time. A grant can be obtained from the Office of Economic Adjustment (Department of Defense) to complete a feasibility study on these costs. A letter of interest from the Governor is needed before the study can be initiated.

Pat Ralston, Director of the Indiana State Emergency Management Agency, spoke on using the feasibility of the Grissom site as a central training site. He noted this option appears to be the least costly for creating a central training site.

Various fire department chiefs spoke on their concerns which included:

- the cost of sending firefighters away to training could be high;
- the time involved, as most training occurs on weekends when volunteer firefighters are available to train; and
- the distance to travel.

Tom Hanify of the Professional Firefighters Union of Indiana spoke on the kind of training that the central site could fulfill. He explained how training technology has changed over the years and become more expensive. He suggested the state needs to make these training opportunities available and that a central location would help organize training efforts.

Diane Mack, a member of the Indiana Counter-Terrorism and Security Council, explained that the Council's role in the state's homeland security strategy is to identify what firefighter training is occurring throughout the state.

Chairman Wyss initiated discussion which led to Marshal Boatwright mentioning that the regional training concept is excellent but departments cannot be mandated to attend training away from home. In return Senator Skinner suggested the General Assembly provide some kind of compensation or reimbursement for those who participate in regional training.

Upon Representative Adams' suggestion, the Committee agreed that it would like Chairman Wyss to forward a letter to the Governor to encourage him to ask that the feasibility study concerning the Grissom facility be performed.

### Conclusion

Chairman Wyss announced the topics, date, time, and location of the Committee's next meeting. The meeting will cover issues from SR 43 (2003) involving titling and registration of vehicles and issues concerning impaired drivers. The meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 26, 2003, at 10:00 a.m. in the State House. Chairman Wyss asked that a letter be sent to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles regarding the next meeting and requesting that its staff make a presentation on impaired driving. He adjourned the meeting at 12:40 p.m.